Table of Contents

01. Letter from the Athletic Director 3
02. Executive Summary 4
03. Strategic Themes 8
04. Key Achievements 11
05. Points of Pride 14
2016-17 was another banner year for the Kent State Golden Flashes, as we continued to hit high benchmarks in the classroom, in the community and on the playing field. Through the leadership of President Beverly Warren and our strategic vision, “The Game Plan,” we have been able to build on our ongoing mission, vision and core values:

- Mission: The mission of Kent State Athletics is to graduate student-athletes and win championships #FlashesForever
- Vision: We are nationally recognized for the exemplary character, achievements and contributions of our student-athletes to better our society
- Core values: Student-athlete well-being, integrity, respect, stewardship and family

The pillars of our athletic department have led us to an exceptional academic year. Our departmental annual GPA rose to 3.218, the second highest mark in our history. While we embarked on a monumental spring season athletically, our student-athletes matched their achievement in the classroom by collectively hitting a 3.217 term GPA. 77 student-athletes finished the 2016-17 academic year with a 4.0 GPA, while 47 percent finished the year with a 3.4 GPA or better. Overall, two-thirds of our 425 student-athletes finished with a 3.0 GPA or better.

Our achievements in the classroom were recognized on a national level. Five teams (women’s basketball, women’s cross country, women’s golf and women’s gymnastics) received NCAA Public Recognition for Academic Progress Rate (APR) scores in the top 10 percent of their respective sports. Six teams led the Mid-American Conference in APR. Nine of our 18 teams finished with a single year APR of 1,000. Individually, we had seven Capital One Academic All-Americans and 158 Academic All-MAC selections.

Our student-athletes were just as impressive in the community this year, contributing a total of 2,423 hours of community service. The highlight of those efforts is the department’s participation in Courts for Kids, in which 19 student-athletes volunteered in Aguacate, Belize. They aided community members in the construction of a multipurpose sports court located next to the local school. That project, as well as several others this year, highlight our commitment to integrity, stewardship and family.

Of course, no summation of this past year can go without the consistent success of our athletic teams. The Flashes finished the season ranked 63rd in the Learfield Cup Standings, which ranks Division I athletic departments for success across all sports. The Golden Flashes were second among all schools in the “Group of 5” conferences and 20 spots ahead of any other school in the MAC. We even finished ahead of nationally prominent athletic brands such as Kansas State, Georgia Tech, Boston College, Texas Tech, Rutgers, Oregon State, Vanderbilt, Washington State and Pitt.

Seven Kent State programs (field hockey, women’s soccer, men’s basketball, softball, baseball, women’s golf, men’s golf) won a MAC regular season or tournament title, while women’s basketball won a MAC East title. The women’s golf team set a new benchmark of success, finishing tied for fifth at the NCAA National Championship. Our men’s basketball team earned a trip out west to play UCLA in the first round of the NCAA Tournament, bringing invaluable notoriety to our institution.

The year was capped off when 10-time All-American Danniel Thomas won the NCAA Outdoor Track and Field National Championship in the shot put. The former Olympian for Jamaica continues to represent Kent State as she moves on to the World Championships in London later this summer. Eleven different Golden Flashes across 10 sports earned All-America honors and 11 student-athletes were honored as MAC Player of the Year for their sport.

Through all of our success, we continue to move forward with “The Game Plan.” We opened up two brand new facilities this year aimed at student-athlete well being: the Athletic Training and Education Center, and the Jenkins Student-Athlete Academic Center. M.A.C. Center renovations have also moved forward this year, including brand new chair-back seats and a recently updated court design.

The success of our athletic department and our student-athletes make this an exciting time to be a Golden Flash.

Go Flashes!

Joel Nielsen
Director of Athletics
**Flashes on the National Stage**

The 2016-17 season was a banner year for Golden Flashes on the national stage. One of the department’s finest years was capped off in the spring, when Danniel Thomas won the outdoor NCAA National Championship in the shot put. She is the first female to win an individual title for Kent State. Thomas’ performance in the shot put was complete dominance, as all six of her throws would have counted as the winning mark. Her performance landed her among Bowerman award semifinalists, making her a nominee for the highest award in collegiate track and field. Thomas will compete at the World Championships in London in late summer 2017. Thomas joins several standout performances on the national stage this year. The men’s basketball team’s run through the MAC Tournament and into the NCAA Tournament brought invaluable notoriety to our institution. Athletics worked closely with University Communications and Marketing and Alumni Relations to maximize the media exposure, resulting in an audience of 2.9 billion and $34.7 million in ad value. Kent State won championships and advanced to the national tournament in several sports throughout the year. The women’s golf team earned its highest finish in program history at Nationals, tying for fifth. The men’s golf team also returned to the NCAA National Championship, with Herb Page being named a finalist for National Coach of the Year. Women’s soccer, field hockey and softball also made impactful championship runs to the NCAA’s.
Student-Athlete Wellness Facilities

The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics opened two crucial facilities aimed at student-athlete well-being in 2016-17: The Athletic Training and Education Center and the Jenkins Student-Athlete Academic Center. Both facilities were major upgrades for the department in the mission to serve students first. The new sports medicine facility is 10,000 square feet and five times the size of the previous training room. The facility’s most unique feature is the cryotherapy unit, a cutting edge technological use of cold therapy where the body is immersed in sub-zero temperatures to turbo-charge its ability to heal. Several NBA, NFL and Olympic athletes use cryotherapy on a regular basis, giving Kent State student-athletes a professional level of treatment. The sports medicine facility also has three therapy pools, including an underwater treadmill, and features an AlterG Anti-Gravity Treadmill which enables student-athletes to rehabilitate lower extremity injuries with less pain, reducing stress on joints and muscles. The Jenkins Student-Athlete Academic Center, unveiled in the spring semester of 2017, is the latest advancement in Kent State Athletics’ initiative to improve student-athlete welfare. The center is a 5,000-square foot facility, with the capability of assisting over 100 student-athletes at a time with their academic needs. The Jenkins Student-Athlete Academic Center was named in honor of George Jenkins (’63), a former football player and proud supporter of Kent State Athletics, who provided the lead gift for the facility.

Flashes Make Global and Local Impact

The Golden Flashes made a substantial impact during the 2016-17 academic year, as student-athletes contributed 2,423 hours to the institution and the world. Kent State University student-athletes traveled to Aguacate, Belize, to partner with Courts for Kids on a service project from May 16-24. A total of 19 student-athletes volunteered to make the trip and were accompanied by five staff members as they aided community members in the construction of a multipurpose sports court located next to the local school. Once they arrived in Aguacate, a village in Belize’s Toledo District, the Kent State Golden Flashes were tasked with transforming an area of dirt located next to the school into a multipurpose court. In addition to serving as a place for children in the community to play volleyball, soccer and basketball, the court will be used for community celebrations, dances and health fairs. Locally, we feel it is our responsibility to give back to the Kent and Portage County community, who have given our department so much over the years. Women’s volleyball kicked off the school year by hosting a school supply drive, in their efforts to collect school supplies to assist local schools in need. On a weekly basis, student-athletes became a strong presence in the local elementary schools with over 150 service hours. Our largest elementary event of 80 student-athletes, from all teams, participating in the fifth annual Moving with the Flashes, a full day consisting of several different physical activity stations taught by athletes. Student-athletes collected over 4,000 Box Tops donated to a Kent area school in need.

Academic Excellence

This year, once again, brought many record-breaking academic numbers to the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics. For the 12th consecutive semester we have had a term GPA above a 3.0, with 65% of our student-athletes above a 3.0 and 47% above a 3.4. In addition to GPA, student-athletes graduated at a record high rate this year. In the spring, 78 student-athletes graced the graduation stage. Our athletic teams also continued to excel in the NCAA annual graduation rates. KSU student-athletes outperformed the general student body by 16 percent, with four teams calculating a 100% graduation success rate (GSR) and 12 teams that either maintained or improved their GSR from one year before. Our overall student-athlete GSR rate continues to increase and stands at 86% (a 3% increase from last year). KSU teams continued to excel in the Academic Progress Rate (APR) as well. Five teams (women’s basketball, women’s golf, gymnastics, women’s cross country and volleyball) all received NCAA accolades for perfect multi-year scores of 1,000.
Executive Summary

**National Anthem**
The Golden Flashes’ commitment to inclusion, stewardship, family and respect as core values helps empower student-athletes to speak their minds. On Nov. 16, 2016, the Kent State University men's basketball team made an impactful statement during a national debate surrounding athletes protesting the national anthem. The student-athletes felt the need to voice their own unique voice, recognizing the issues that face them while standing in solidarity with a supportive Kent State community. During the Nov. 16 home game, and during every home game from then on, the Flashes grabbed fans of all backgrounds and cultures to stand on the court with them during the national anthem. The statement was met with unanimous praise on a national level, with coverage across national outlets such as ESPN, Fox News, CBS Sports and Sports Illustrated. Overall, the positive story generated $2.7 million in ad value for the university and set up a truly distinctive season for Kent State men’s basketball.

**Success in the MAC**
Kent State proved to be the dominant all-around intercollegiate athletic program in the Mid-American Conference in 2016-17. Our mission is to graduate student-athletes and win championships, and this year we brought home trophies in seven sports. Field hockey, women's soccer, men's basketball, softball, baseball, women's golf and men's golf all won regular season or tournament championships, while women's basketball won a MAC East title. The Flashes earned MAC Player of the Year honors in 11 sports and MAC Coach of the Year accolades in six sports.

**Achievements in Advancement**
The goals of the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics could not be reached without the help of philanthropic support. We have made great strides this year in reaching our longterm financial goals, some of which include a basketball and volleyball practice venue and major renovations to the M.A.C. Center. This year, the National Athletic Development Council (NADC) committed $1,000,000 through a cash pledge. $750,000 will be used towards our practice court project and $250,000 will be used for various athletic priorities through the NADC advised Guardian Fund. An additional $2,000,000 bequest was made this year establishing endowments for men's basketball. This is an anonymous bequest increasing the donors bequest to $8,000,000 toward men's basketball endowments. This past year, advancement secured seven new commitments (gifts and pledges) greater than $100,000. Internally, our athletic department staff has bought into the mission and vision of the program, with 99 percent participation in the Annual Staff Giving Campaign. Also, this spring season was highlighted by our most successful scholarship auction to date, raising $145,000 for student-athlete scholarships.
Executive Summary

Cartwright Award
The Golden Flashes started the academic year off with an esteemed honor, receiving the 2016 Cartwright Award from the MAC. Kent State Athletics received the award for its program excellence in academics, athletics and citizenship. It is the program’s third Cartwright Award honor in the last seven years, the most of any program in the MAC. The Cartwright Award is named in honor of Dr. Carol A. Cartwright, one of the most highly respected voices in higher education. Dr. Cartwright served as the President of Kent State University from 1991-2006 and President of Bowling Green State University from 2008-2011. She has served on the NCAA Board of Directors and is a member of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics. As the highest honored program since the inception of the award, Kent State has put forth an incredible case to be a repeat winner in the fall of 2017.

Competition Facility Upgrades
The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics has gone through pivotal upgrades on three of our most important competition facilities. This summer, Kent State redesigned the court in the M.A.C. Center, the most substantial court redesign in over a decade. The new court displays several of the branding elements the department has worked on alongside the University Communications and Marketing office. The center court logo has expanded and is combined with two lightning bolts that span the width of the court. The court was designed by Kent State student Benjamin Arnsby and has been met with near universal praise externally. In addition to the court project, new turf has been installed at Dix Stadium and Murphy-Mellis Field. The new turf fields will provide a better playing experience for our football, women’s soccer and field hockey teams this season, while women’s lacrosse will utilize the turf in 2018-19. All three projects are crucial in attracting the best talent to Kent State.

Budget Focus
While The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics continues to aim at graduating student-athletes and winning championships, we are also focused on aligning the budget to meet the university’s expectations. The department administration has presented a five-year budget plan focused on fiscal responsibility. Over the next five years, Kent State athletics will provide student-athletes with an exceptional college experience, while remaining dedicated to meeting the financial expectations of the university.
Strategic Themes

The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics will be aligned with the institutional values, mission and vision.

With the established roadmap for the university, the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics will be strategically aligned in its decision making with the core values, mission, and vision for Kent State University. Every goal, priority and strategy included in our division’s work was created to be consistent with our stated values, mission and vision for Kent State Athletics, as presented below:

**Mission**
Graduate student-athletes and win championships
#FlashesForever

**Vision**
We are nationally recognized for the exemplary character, achievements and contributions of our student-athletes to better our society.

**Core Values**
Student-Athlete Well-Being: We are committed to the health, safety, academic, athletic and personal growth of each student.
Integrity: We do the right thing and hold each other accountable.
Respect: We respect all people, their culture, beliefs, identity and thought.
Stewardship: We are responsible guardians of the university’s resources, relationships and reputation.
Family: We are a collaborative team supporting one another.
The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics will focus upon student-athlete well-being, health and safety
This commitment will channel resources in ways that support student-athlete success including: academic services, health and safety, sports medicine, nutrition and dining options, sports performance, and providing a full range of NCAA permitted benefits to all student-athletes.

- Opened the doors to the state-of-the-art Athletic Training and Education Center. Located in the Memorial Athletic & Convocation Center Annex (behind M.A.C. Center) and spanning over 10,000-square feet, the two-floor space is a key asset for the Golden Flashes’ 425 student-athletes. The sports medicine facility has three therapy pools, including an underwater treadmill, a cryotherapy unit, and features an AlterG Anti-Gravity Treadmill.
- Opened the doors to the Jenkins Student-Athlete Academic Center, a 5,000-square foot facility, with the capability of assisting over 100 student-athletes at a time with their academic needs. The Jenkins Student-Athlete Academic Center was named in honor of George Jenkins, a proud supporter of Kent State Athletics and the provider of the lead gift for the facility.
- Guided 78 student-athletes to graduation in the spring of 2017. Improved the departmental GPA to 3.218.
- Emphasized mental health awareness through initiatives spearheaded by the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee.
- Hosted personal development events throughout the year including a lecture on sexual assault and substance abuse. The department sent four student-athletes to the APPLE Conference in Virginia. There, the student-athletes collaborated to create new initiatives within the athletic department. The main focus was revising the current athletics drug testing policy, adding a safe harbor program, and medical amnesty guidelines.

The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics will continue its commitment to a broad-based program of sports sponsorships, and will focus its commitment to equity by providing competitive opportunities for women
The history of providing a broad-based offering of sports will continue with the current offering of sports and will include the future addition of new women’s sports

- Will add women’s lacrosse in 2018-19 and position the program for success. This past year, announced an experienced head coach in Brianne Tierney and joined the Atlantic Sun Conference.
- Continue to emphasize the achievements of our women’s teams, who won a total of five conference or division championships in 2016-17.

Head Women’s Lacrosse Coach Brianne Tierney
The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics will strategically invest in programs and initiatives that grow the resources needed to support Kent State Athletics

The enabling factor in achieving our goals is increased private support. As such, there will be a concerted effort to motivate all constituencies to renew and ultimately increase their philanthropic support of Kent State Athletics.

- Capitalized on our achievements in men’s basketball, the initial vehicle for increasing revenue generation and national distinctiveness. This year we received an additional $2,000,000 bequest establishing endowments for men’s basketball. This is an anonymous bequest increasing the donors bequest to $8,000,000 towards men’s basketball endowments.

- We have aimed our primary fundraising focus on a practice facility for basketball and volleyball, as well as long term plans aimed at M.A.C. Center renovations.
Students First - Provide an inclusive and engaged living-learning environment where all student thrive and graduate as informed citizens committed to a life of impact.

- Department annual GPA rose to 3.218, second highest in recorded history.
- Department spring 2017 term cumulative GPA rose to 3.217, also second highest in recorded history.
- 12th consecutive term of 3.0+ cumulative department GPA; 11th consecutive 3.0+ term GPA.
- 77 student-athletes boasted a 4.0 GPA (fall/spring).
- 65% of KSU student-athletes finished the year with a 3.0 or higher GPA.
- 47% of KSU student-athletes finished the year with a 3.4 or higher GPA.

APR
- NCAA Public Recognition – Women’s Basketball, Women’s Cross Country, Women’s Golf, Women’s Gymnastics, APR scores were publicly recognized in the NCAA Top 10% of their sport.
- Six teams ranked 1st among other MAC teams.
- No KSU team has a multi-year rate below 930. No teams are subject to penalties.
- 9 teams with a single year APR of 1000; 5 teams with multi-year APR of 1000.

Graduation Success
- Five teams with 100% GSR (Field Hockey, Men’s Golf, Women’s Golf, Women’s Soccer & Volleyball).
- Student-athletes graduation rate is 16% higher than the general student-body.
MAC/NCAA Recognition

- 7 = CoSIDA/Capital One Academic All-American.
- 4 = CoSIDA/Capital One Academic All-District recognitions.
- 158 = Academic All-MAC selections.
- The men’s and women’s cross country teams were both honored as USTFCCCA All-Academic Teams.
- Wrestling was recognized by the NWCA for being ranked fourth in the nation in team grade point average.
- Eighteen field hockey players were named to the NFHCA Division National Academic Squad, the second most of any school in the country.
- Baseball led the MAC with 11 Academic All-MAC selections.

Regional Impact - Serve as the innovative and engaged partner to meet community needs and enhance quality of life in the region and state.

- The baseball and softball teams assisted in creating 130 holiday baskets for the community members of King Kennedy Center. Those baskets were then distributed during the center’s holiday party to those in need.
- Men’s and women’s golf programs teamed up with the Ben Curtis Family Foundation in their efforts to service underprivileged youth in the Kent area by giving each student a “Birdie Bag” filled with food and other supplies to help through extended weekends. The two teams then went out and rang the bell for the Salvation Army during the holidays.
- Getting their hands dirty, volleyball teamed up with Habitat for Humanity and put in over 30 hours of labor in the creation and renovation of homes.
- Gymnastics hosted its 10th annual Flip for the Cure event. This year’s meet collected $6,000 in proceeds that went to the COSA CARES program, a non-profit agency that helps women and their families battling breast cancer.
- The Student-Athlete Advisory Committee held a “Be The Match” donor drive and registered nearly 150 people to a national organization that manages the largest bone marrow registry.
- While on the road, men’s and women’s basketball spent their Thanksgiving preparing and serving meals to the less fortunate in Florida. Women’s basketball also spent time with a local juvenile center, helping educate abused children on making the right choices.

A Distinctive Kent State - Drive innovation, idea generation and national distinction through top-tier academic and research programs including the recruitment and support of talented faculty and staff.

- During the 2016-17 academic year, The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics formally entered into an agreement with University Hospitals (UH) as the Preferred Healthcare Provider for the Golden Flashes. As the Preferred Healthcare Provider for Kent State Athletics, UH provides a complete multi-disciplinary team of physician specialists to Kent State student-athletes. The agreement stipulates that UH will
provide medical counsel and coverage for over 400 student-athletes who compete at Kent State. UH is deeply rooted in Northeast Ohio sports and is also the healthcare provider for the Mid-American Conference and the Cleveland Browns. UH became the official health care partner of the Cleveland Browns in 2014, and has been responsible for providing comprehensive medical care to players and their families as well as any urgent care required by fans at the First Energy stadium.

- In 2016-2017, the Leadership Institute was composed of 28 student-athletes who met monthly. This year, each individual participated in a DISC assessment, where they learned more about the impression their leadership and behaviors are having on those they work with the closest. We offer Life After Sport as a capstone course option for graduating student-athletes. In addition to a focus on the emotional aspects of retirement from sport, the course also covers resume building, interviewing skills and transferable skills obtained through athletic participation.

Global Competitiveness - Advance Kent State’s impact and reach as a leading international university.

- Kent State student-athletes shine on a global scale, which was made evident this year by Danniel Thomas’ performance at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. A representative of Jamaica, Thomas recorded a best throw of 16.99m (55’ 9”) on her final attempt to top nearly a third of field and finish in the top-25. Since the Olympic Games, Thomas has developed into one of the world’s best shot put throwers. She will compete in the World Championships in August in late summer and will enter the global competition having hit one of the five greatest marks in the history of the sport.
- In August of 2017, the Kent State men’s basketball team will be taking its international trip to Costa Rica. There, the Golden Flashes will be competing in a tournament against the Costa Rican National Team and two intercollegiate teams from Canada. The trip will serve as a development experience for our student-athletes while also extending the Kent State brand in Central America.

Organizational Stewardship - Ensure a culture of continuous improvement and the efficient stewardship of university resources and infrastructure.

- The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics had a banner evening April 28 in hosting the Athletics Scholarship Auction at the Memorial Athletic Convocation Center. While welcoming back former Golden Flash and current New York Jet Brian Winters as the guest of honor, Kent State raised a net $145,000 from 454 registered bidders benefiting student-athlete scholarships. The silent auction pulled in $46,046, while the live auction raised $20,500. Friday evening’s event brought the annual tradition’s five-year total to $525,000.
- Streamlined renewal process and year-end review for The Golden Flashes Club, Basketball tickets and football tickets through launching “The Program”, an annual publication designed to highlight The Golden Flashes Club and Kent State Athletics.
- The Department of Intercollegiate Athletics recently restructured its department with an emphasis on student-athlete services and well-being. Three members of the athletics staff were elevated to administrative positions including Trent Stratton as associate athletic director for sports medicine, sports performance and student-athlete well-being, Angie Hull as associate athletic director of academic services, and Stephanie Danesis as assistant athletic director for compliance.
2016-17 POINTS OF PRIDE

3.22 DEPARTMENT GPA
12th CONSECUTIVE TERM OF 3.0+ DEPARTMENT GPA

12 TEAMS WITH BOTH TERM & CUMULATIVE GPA ABOVE 3.0

1 CHAMPIONSHIPS
WOMEN’S GOLF 10th CONSECUTIVE MAC CHAMPIONSHIP

5th WOMEN’S GOLF CHAMPIONSHIPS

NATIONAL CHAMPION DANNIEL THOMAS
SHOT PUT

11 MAC PLAYERS OF THE YEAR
6 MAC COACHES OF THE YEAR

400 POINTS NO. 1 IN MID-AMERICAN CONFERENCE
63rd IN THE NATION

14 ALL-AMERICANS

Kent State Athletics - Annual Report